

Offenders who have received prison sentences in Washington State receive a barrage of assessments upon entry into the institution, including a chemical dependency (CD) screen. Due to this process, fair amounts of information are known about prison inmates, including how many are presumed to be chemically dependent. There is no such standardized screening for offenders receiving jail sentences. Only estimates can be made about the pervasiveness of chemical dependency among offenders who receive felony sentences but do not go to prison.

DATA FROM OTHER SOURCES

Two types of data exist upon which estimates can be based: national statistics on jail arrestees and state prison data. Nationally, data on convicted jail inmates shows over half had used drugs regularly, which is defined as once per week for at least one month¹. In 1989, 58 percent reported regular drug use, which increased to 64.2 percent by 1996.

The federal Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring Program (ADAM) retrieves quarterly data on booked arrestees from Spokane and Seattle as part of its national report on drug abuse. For Fiscal Year 1999², Spokane ranged from 59.0-66.3 percent of booked arrestees producing positive drug tests. Seattle arrestees with positive drug tests ranged from 63.3-71.5 percent. In both cities, females averaged more positive drug tests than males (Table 1). In Seattle, older females were more likely to produce positive tests, while there was no age difference for males.

Positive Test for Any Drug FY99 - ADAM Data

Table 1

	Seattle		Spokane	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Sex	67%	77%	63%	68%
Race				
White	64%	75%	62%	71%
Black	76%	88%	74%	40%
Other	59%	50%	60%	71%
Age				
18-24	69%	70%	70%	69%
25-34	68%	77%	67%	69%
35+	66%	83%	54%	67%

Data on Washington State's prison population has previously been used to estimate overall felony offender chemical dependency prevalence. Chemical dependency screening data on Fiscal Year 2002 admissions were analyzed. Of offenders who received a chemical dependency screening within six months of admission, 85 percent were presumed to be chemically dependent (Table 2). In the case of the prison population, it appears that females are almost as likely to be chemically dependent as males.

JAIL STUDY METHODOLOGY

The CD Prevalence study was conducted with the intention of filling the information gap between felons receiving prison sentences and felons receiving non-prison, or jail, sentences. The screening tool was given during the community supervision intake process upon the offender's release from jail. That is the soonest point of contact after the offender's sentence, which mirrors what occurs in the prison setting; screenings occur soon after sentencing.

¹ Bureau of Justice Statistics (2000). Drug Use, Testing and Treatment in Jails. Washington, DC: US Dept of Justice.

² Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring Program (1999). Spokane Quarterly Report, Vol 1(1). Washington, DC: US Dept of Justice; Seattle Quarterly Report, Vol 1(1). Washington, DC: US Dept of Justice.

The same screening tool that is used in the prisons was utilized here. It is a self-administered questionnaire consisting of 15 questions that signifies any need for further discovery. The screen was filled out by the offenders at some point during the intake process.

Eight field offices were asked to participate with data collection. These offices were chosen because they contained an intake unit and could collect an adequate amount of data in a short amount of time. All but one office was located on the western side of the state; Spokane was the only office on the eastern side that had an intake unit. In about three month's time, 493 completed CD screens were collected.

FY02 Prison Admissions

Table 2

	CD #	CD %	Not CD #	Not CD %	Total n=2003
Sex					
Males	1,351	86%	226	14%	1,577
Females	355	83%	71	17%	426
Race					
White*	1,214	87%	188	13%	1,402
Black	375	81%	90	19%	465
Other	117	86%	19	14%	136
Age					
LT 18	27	48%	29	52%	56
18-24	327	84%	63	16%	390
25-34	644	87%	93	13%	737
35+	708	86%	112	14%	820
Crime					
Person	223	78%	62	22%	285
Property, Other	507	89%	62	11%	569
Drug	824	84%	160	16%	984
Unknown**	152	92%	13	8%	165

*Includes White with Hispanic origin

**Includes Community Custody violators

CD Prevalence Study Of Felons Receiving Non-Prison Sentences

Table 3

	CD #	CD %	Not CD #	Not CD %	Total n=493
Sex					
Males	103	27%	279	73%	382
Females	41	37%	70	63%	111
Race					
White*	123	31%	269	69%	392
Black	15	26%	42	74%	57
Other	6	14%	38	86%	44
Age					
LT 18	0	0%	1	100%	1
18-24	35	20%	143	80%	178
25-34	52	35%	98	65%	150
35+	57	35%	107	65%	164
Crime					
Person	24	23%	79	77%	103
Property, Other	62	24%	196	76%	258
Drug	58	44%	74	56%	132

*Includes White with Hispanic origin

**Includes Community Custody violators

Analysis of survey data shows 29 percent were presumed according to the screen to be chemically dependent (see Table 3). Variability found among the demographic characteristics in national data sources was also found here. Of particular interest was that more females were presumed to be chemically dependent than males. Washington State prison data reflects just the opposite.

It appears that the prevalence of chemical dependency among felons who do not go to prison is considerably less than among those who do. This may seem surprising given the number of arrestees who test positive for drugs at booking. More research would be needed to provide a clearer picture of chemical dependency prevalence in felons who do not go to prison.